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Title: FILMS OF THE FATHERLAND (USSR)

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In 1946 the popular-science movie industry began to produce short-length films in the "Travels Throughout the USSR" series. The producers of these films were entrusted with making geography films which would acquaint large numbers of spectators with the geography, natural resources, beauty, and places of interest in our country. During the past two years the studios have produced about thirty films in this series.

There are many good books about the geography of our land. But motion pictures are better able to present graphically all the beauty of the vast expanses of the Soviet Union.

In speaking about the "Travels Throughout the USSR" series, it is impossible not to mention a book by N. Mikhaylov, Nad kartoy Rodiny (On the Map of the Native Land), which won a Stalin Prize this year. It is a geography of our country with figures, facts, and generalizations. But it is more than that; it is a work of art which reflects the face of our native land. "What changes have taken place in our land during the last thirty years?" asks Mikhaylov. "The amount of peat in our bogs has increased; here new springs of water have begun to flow -- there old ones have dried up; somewhere in a cave stalactites and stalagmites have joined to form single columns. Millions of years are needed for the formation of coal and metal ore. But compare an old map that locates mineral beds with a new one. On each of them is recorded the labors of the Soviet people, their indomitable will, long years of searching, failures that have been overcome, and thought that has triumphed over all."

Mikhaylov's book is an accurate picture of our land. It combines scientific content with artistic form. In creating this picture he has

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used line and detail. The producers of the film series "Travels Throughout the USSR" have, as yet, made little use of such line and detail. Despite the fact that Nad kartoy Rodiny is a literary production and the "Travels Throughout the USSR" series a cinematographic one, the methods of their production are similar. The tasks which they perform are related. And when the producers use these methods skillfully they are able to create very good films. As an example we will use a film called "The Carpathians" (directed by V. Gonchukov). The subject matter is attractive. The geography of the locale is presented not only by means of landscapes and scenery but by the people of the area, their history and national culture. In the film there is a glimpse into the future of these people who are engaged in constructive labor. "The Carpathians" is a graphic example of the fact that history creates geography and that people make history.

Just as well done and attractive are the films "Kolkhida" (directed by L. Al'tsev), "Our Subtropics", and "A White Spot on the Sagan Glacier" (directed by V. Shneyderov). Almost all of these films are produced from materials supplied by scientific expeditions. Liaison with scientists on expeditions has greatly aided the makers of motion pictures to acquire that unity in which the scientific element balances the artistic element and the latter aids the spectator in the comprehension of the former.

It is interesting to watch a film in which views of a locality are interspersed with dramatic events. Examples of such films are "A White Spot on the Sagan Glacier," "The Island of Iona," and "The Region of Fantastic Cliffs." These films show the struggle of the people with obstacles on the path of the attainment of their goal. They show how the Bolsheviks are remaking savage nature and changing the geography of the

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locality. Actors who reflect the economy and ethnography of the region make the films even more significant.

In order to create the living image of a country on the screen, the cinematographer makes use of more means than does the literary man. A writer merely describes nature and speaks of the people who have remade our land. The cinematographers, however, can show the same thing, accompanying it with a corresponding text.

However, it is necessary to say that the authors of the "Travels Throughout the USSR" series, with artistic-director V. Shneyderov at their head, have failed to find a central theme that would unite all of the films of this series into one whole. Often, in deciding on a theme for one film they do not take into consideration how it will fit into the series as a whole. This is the reason for the absence of continuity in the series.

From the very beginning the directors were attracted by well-known localities. Three films were made in the Caucasus -- "Our Subtropics" (Batumi), "Pearl of the Caucasus" (Sochi), and "November in Sukhumi." They are good films but they do not give the spectator a complete picture of the nature and resources of the Caucasian seacoast. There is little that is perceptive in these films. Attracted by the fascinating beauty of the Black Sea resorts, the authors of these films forgot man -- the transformer of nature.

M. Sokolov (Novosibirsk Studio of Popular Science Films) is the producer of the films: "Yenisey," "Beyond the Sayan Range," and "Along the Usinsk Road." The names are different, but the subject matter is similar. There is only one thing in all three films -- the Yenisey River. And Siberia is such a vast, interesting, and wealthy region that it is not

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necessary to picture it as only the Yenisey River and the Sayan Range. It is necessary to tell of the people of Siberia -- the builders of socialist industry.

The absence of a precise definition of the aim of the series has led to mistakes now and then. For instance, L. Kogan, producer of the film, "Land of Khibiny," should have acquainted the spectator with a recently mastered region where, during the years of Soviet rule, tremendous reserves of apatite have been discovered. Shortly afterwards factories sprang up around the mines. All of this was brought about by the hands of the Soviet people. "Land of Khibiny" should have shown the labor of these people and the process of mining apatite. Instead of this a dull film was produced in which a text read by an announcer replaces the showing of the riches of Khibiny. For this reason the film was never released.

No less instructive is the case of another film. The Alekseyevs, the directors, went to Sakhalin. As a result of the lack of careful planning, all they succeeded in doing was making a film that lasted four hours, but had no other virtue than that it was in color. By the way, all of these films should have been taken in color.

The directors of this series of films should throw equal light on all the regions of the country. "Travels" should not be made only to out-of-the-way, unknown corners of our land. It is necessary to film the central regions of the RSFSR as well as the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic Region.

The interest of the Soviet spectator in good films is growing. But, unfortunately, the films of this series are rarely shown in Moscow. It is even worse in the Moscow Oblast. In the stock of films of the oblast

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releasing office there are only 25 films of the series "Travels Throughout the USSR." They are sent out to remote districts as supplementary films to be shown with regular features. Even in the oblast office of Glavkino-prokat (Main Administration for Release and Distribution of Motion Pictures) it is not known where, how often, or when these films are shown.

There is another group of spectators for whom the showing of these films is of great interest. These are school children. The value of these films as educational aids should not be underestimated. Lessons given by means of films are coming into wider use. Schools are being equipped to show films. But the school projectors are for showing small-size films and not for showing films of the type of this series.

It is time for the Ministry of Cinematography to arrange for the release of such pictures on narrow film.

Moving pictures enrich the people by informing them. They also instruct them in love of their native land and in Soviet patriotism. The "Travels Throughout the USSR" series will occupy a worthy place among the films created by our popular science studios.

V. Dneprov

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